



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION Good News Report

SHARING THE GOSPEL ♦ EQUIPPING THE CHURCH ♦ HELPING THE FORGOTTEN

Immanuel's Child Is Taking the Gospel to Children & Families



How God Is Multiplying Your Prayers & Gifts

- ♦ *Immanuel's Child* Is Coming Soon!
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Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit . . . (MATTHEW 28:19)

Immanuel's Child Is Coming Soon!

Remembering Last Year's Fruitful Ministry with Thankful Hearts

The faithful churches SGA serves are already busily preparing to reach even more children with the Gospel this Christmas season through *Immanuel's Child* outreaches.

Andrei, an SGA-supported missionary pastor in Russia, looks back at last year's ministry with anticipation of what God will do this year. "Our first project last Christmas season was a visit to several villages in the Krasnoyarsk region. A team from Krasnoyarsk was to accompany us with a Christmas play. We expected both adults and children would be waiting for us. We had lots of snow and we were worried that we would not be able to get there. For example, if after a snowfall we had windy weather, then even off-road vehicles would not be able to get us there and bring us back. However, everything went well and we safely returned home—although in one place we had to dig snow for two hours. The leading car missed the track in the road and sank into a drift, but with the help of the second car and shovels, we were able to solve this problem. We did not worry much, because the program was over the same day and all we allow for time was to stay there for supper.

The next day we were worried a bit because it was windy, and on the way home we had to drive through snow piles. The driver of the leading car was really worried about the next day, saying that we would not get to the village we planned unless the wind died down. He even told me that we would have to cancel our outreaches, because we simply would not get there. Also, the road was a



Clear roads allowed the team to reach Verkh-Chetsk for the Christmas program.

dead-end. All I could do at that point was to invite them to pray. At night after supper, we prayed and asked those who were left in Krasnoyarsk and were in touch with us to pray for the next day and for our difficult journey. On the next day when we hit the road, we were witnesses of the miracle from the Lord. The road was nice and clean, which meant that the maintenance crew was on the road for the whole night. We drove and rejoiced because we saw the answers to our prayers that reached heaven, and that our local authorities worked on their day off, which prepared our way. They did not know about our prayers.

In one village, God opened the schools for our Christmas outreach there. On January 12 we were welcomed by 300 children from three local public schools—grades 3 to 6! When we arrived to prepare the assembly hall for the play, we noticed that there was a large crowd of children together with their teachers marching to the school from another school. We also had two more Christmas performances for children in two more other villages in the Bogotolsky area. A team from the church in Uzhur visited us with a puppet show. We thank God for the open doors for these Christmas outreaches, and for the opportunity to have gifts you helped provide for both the children and adults in the northern villages of the area. Please pray for this year's Christmas ministries and subsequent ministries of our church afterward. ♦



Boys at an *Immanuel's Child* outreach in Russia.

God's Grace and Power at Work in Belarus

Nikolai N.

SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Belarus

In my ministry, both at our own church and in regional churches, I have been constantly involved in organizing and participating in evangelistic services for villages in our region. I have participated in training conferences, prayer meetings, and home visits for personal evangelism. We also help the church in a

nearby village, where it is encouraging that more of the Roma people are attending services, and those who have already come to Christ are actively participating. Among them are talented musicians and singers. It is also encouraging that some Sunday school children have created their first group. One



Gita shares her testimony.



Ministry to Roma people.

woman named Gita shared a very interesting testimony about her repentance. She often told fortunes, cheated, and stole, but after her conversion, she returned the losses to those she could, although many people didn't know she had stolen from them.

We continue our ministry at the House of Mercy and the Rehabilitation Center, visiting six families in need twice a month, bringing them food packages and Christian literature. I recently began visiting one family—the father Vitaly, mother Inna, and their children—Katya, Arsenty, and Nina. Vitaly has no vision in his left eye but has 60 percent vision

in his right eye. Their eldest daughter, Nina, is nine years old and attends a boarding school for hearing-impaired children.

Vitaly used to drink heavily, and about two years ago, social services threatened to strip him of his parental rights. After this, he underwent treatment for alcoholism at a drug treatment center. Before the New Year, his treatment ended, and the drug treatment center began pressuring him to undergo treatment again. Vitaly refused. Afterward, a worker from the child protection center visited the family and saw the lights on in the House of Prayer where I was. She asked me to help Vitaly's family maintain a healthy lifestyle. She said that people who undergo treatment usually return to their addiction after a certain period. In her observations, people who attend evangelical churches become successful families! After our conversation, a child protection center worker and I visited Vitaly and Inna's family, where she strongly advised Vitaly to either get treatment or maintain a relationship with the church. He chose the latter.

Vitaly and I had known each other before, but he had refused to come to church. Now he attends church at least two or three times a month. Inna considers herself Orthodox and does not attend yet. However, she promised to attend the Easter service and did. We ask that you pray for this family. Our job is to put in the effort, but only God, in Whom we trust, can give results! May the Lord richly reward you and all who support our ministry with prayers and every blessing! ♦



Vitaly and Arsenty.

MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER IN ACTION

He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure (Psalm 40:2).



Home group at Pastor Yuri's house.

This month's powerful testimony is shared by Yuri Romanchik, an SGA-supported missionary pastor and new leader of the Baptist Union in Belarus, who writes . . .

"Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! I write with particular awe, because these two months the Lord has shown us such miracles that can only be described as resurrection from the dead! We have seen God save people from destruction and restore broken families. Each of these stories is living proof that our labor is not in vain, even if the results are not immediate.



Yuri with Sergei after his repentance.

Thank you for being with us. You are a part of each of these miracles!

Our first Sergei is an orphan. He has not known parental love since childhood, and when the girl he loved abandoned him, his world collapsed. In despair, he got drunk, took a razor blade, and slit his wrists in his dorm room. He was going to die alone. But God had other plans. At the very hour when Sergei was losing consciousness, a believer from the next room happened to walk into Sergei's room. He had felt anxiety in his heart and began knocking, but no one answered. He found a way in and saw

Sergei lying in a pool of blood. He immediately called an ambulance. The doctors later said that another ten minutes and he would have been lost!

We learned of this the next day and immediately went to the hospital. Sergei lay pale, his wrists cut, but he was alive! We didn't give him long sermons—we simply sat next to him, read the Psalms, and talked about God, who leaves no orphans. Then, lying in his hospital bed, Sergei burst into tears and said, 'If God really exists and He saved me, I want to give my life to Him.' He repented sincerely, with a broken but revived heart. Now Sergei is a completely different person. He regularly attends church, has found a job, and has found brothers and sisters. Now he's preparing for water baptism. From death to eternal life. That's what God does!

Our second Sergei has a completely different story. He's an amazing intellectual with three university degrees. He was married, and after a serious conflict, he and his wife sought counseling. Unfortunately, instead of encouraging reconciliation, they were counseled that divorce was the best option. Sergei was left alone, devastated, having lost



Yuri with Sergei after his reconciliation.

not only his wife but also his faith in people. He came to our church, distraught. We simply prayed with him for healing in their relationship and for the salvation of his soul. He left, and nothing was heard from him for a long time.

Imagine our joy when many years later, Sergei reappeared at church—radiant, happy, with his wife and . . . three children! He told us that after that prayer, God miraculously began to work in his heart and in the heart of his ex-wife. They began communicating again, then dating, then realized they loved each other more than ever. They remarried, and then the Lord gave them three wonderful children. The family now lives in Spain where Sergei was baptized and actively serves in the local church. When he arrived and we met, he said tearfully, 'That prayer of yours didn't go unnoticed. It just took time for God to bring everything together. Thank you for praying for me and our broken family!'

That's how we see the fruits of our labor over the years. This is incredibly encouraging! May God bless you in all your endeavors and strengthen your families. Thank you for being with us on this journey." ♦

Equipping Stewardship

Garland Gould

SGA Senior Vice President of Partner Engagement



Garland Gould

We have spent the past several months covering steps in the estate planning and design process and the five biblical principles we lean on in that process. As we counsel families through this planning process, we share a few axioms. These axioms are born from the 5 **Biblical Principles**. They help serve the family as they pray about—and consider—decisions from perhaps new or different perspectives.

The first of these axioms is a direct derivative of Principle #1: **God Is the Owner of All**. This axiom is to "ask the Owner what He would have you do with what He has entrusted to you when you no longer need it." The first two reasons we do this are the most obvious—as obedience to the Father and as common courtesy. The third reason may not be as

obvious but is very practical: only God knows the future. These decisions will have an impact on the future of our families and loved ones. You and I don't even know what tomorrow holds. We cannot possibly predict the impact and outcomes of these personal and financial decisions, but God can. So, as you pray, ask God to reveal His truths to you to guide you in your decision making.

If you would like to discuss this axiom or have any other questions, please let us know how we can best serve you. If you would like to receive the resource, *Principles of Estate Planning* and the complementary *Estate Inventory* booklet, please reach out to us. And lastly, we also have an informational newsletter that you may find helpful and interesting. You can reach us for either, or both resources, at plannedgiving@sga.org. Many have shared with me how practical and helpful these principles are for their family and their estate planning. ♦

Ukraine: God Gives Opportunities Every Day!

Denis Z.
SGA-Supported Missionary Pastor in Ukraine

Greetings in the Lord! Thank you for your prayerful and financial support of our ministry, which we carry out for the glory of God. We strive to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ through our lives, both in word and deed.

Last winter in Ukraine was very difficult, especially for regional cities. In Odesa, there was no power for a week straight, and multi-story buildings had no water. Even in such circumstances, we can show people the love and warmth that God gives. Sometimes the tasks are considered menial, but God uses them. For example, I helped people carry water up more than 10 floors. People were shy and uncomfortable accepting help, but I had the opportunity to tell them about Christ—the One who walked through cities and preached even though He could have stayed in one place and waited for people to come to Him.



Pastor Denis with his family.

We also launched free haircuts. Inna, a professional barber on our team, agreed to serve with the gift God gave her. We offer this service at the church: when people come for a haircut, there is an opportunity to chat and have tea. Usually when people come to the service, they sit and remain silent, but at haircuts the atmosphere is different—there are fewer people, and they're more open. You can have deeper conversations about God, life, family, and explore their personal needs.

Our son David was eating when an elderly man walked into the church—dirty and unkempt. David approached him and shared some sausage with him. This was unusual for David—he had never done this before.

An older woman named Nina also comes to us. She often arrives earlier to chat. She tells her children about the church. Her daughter Ekaterina was applying for a job with many applicants and asked me to pray for her. A month later, she was hired. Nina has been feeling unwell lately—she's 87 years old. She came to church on Sunday to thank everyone for the prayers on her daughter's behalf. Unfortunately, she became ill and went home, but she came specifically to share this news and to praise God. She also said that we might not see each other again because God was taking her. She expressed gratitude for the church opening in her area and for



Haircutting ministry.

her hearing the Gospel!

We live on the second floor, and our windows overlook the courtyard—we heard how people talked about us before and how differently they talk about us now. It's a great blessing that nine people in our building now attend church, and we have a teen ministry as well. When we first arrived, we were treated like a cult. Thank God that we can show Him through our lives and be His witnesses! Thank you to everyone who supports us in your prayers. May the Lord bless you! ♦



(Top) Bible study; (Above Left) Teen ministry; (Above Right) Sunday service.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

At SGA, we always look forward with joy and anticipation at what God will do at Christmastime through the *Immanuel's Child* ministry you help support across the countries of the former Soviet Union. Even now, the faithful churches are busily preparing for what could be yet another record number of children being reached with the Gospel, and their families as well. Your prayers and faithful support help accomplish this and so much more—provision of Bibles and Christian literature, Bible training, Compassion Ministry, and other children's ministries such as *Orphans Reborn* and Summer Bible Camps. Please prayerfully consider how much you can help with your gift today! ♦



(Top) Opening of a new church in Belarus; (Above) IC outreach in Russia.

Insight FROM MICHAEL

When we think of Christmas here in America, many struggle with an almost jaded feeling. What should be a wonderful season gets more and more commercialized each year. Stores begin putting Christmas displays up in summer, and the online barrage begins as well. We hear about more and more families struggling to find the time to be together like they used to be years ago before a host of competing interests lay claim for attention. Above all, there is so much effort—perhaps unwittingly—to pull our attention away from what Christmas is all about, and that is the birth of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who came to . . . *save His people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21).



I am so thankful for the SGA-supported *Immanuel's Child* Christmas ministry that you help support through your prayers and gifts. Yes, the churches we serve across the former Soviet Union start their planning early because this unique ministry now reaches more than 70,000 children and their families.

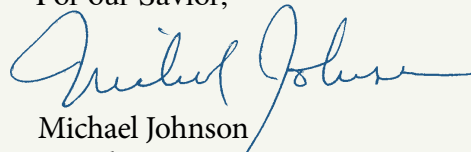
“ . . . this unique ministry now reaches more than 70,000 children and their families.”

Accordingly we must take early steps to help provide the financial resources they need to reach ever more children with the Gospel. The focus is where it should be—on Christ and what He has done for us through His atoning death on the cross and glorious resurrection! While the attention of the world is often on specific calendar days, the story of Jesus is one timeless Gospel truth that can be shared at any time of the year!

It is worth noting something churches there have in common with Western churches. There are people who only show up in church at Christmas and Easter. And that is prime, fertile ground for sharing the life-changing Gospel. With *Immanuel's Child*, while the primary focus is on reaching children, thousands of adults hear the Gospel as well during the outreaches. Each year, the churches report back to us on the number of adults who repented and trusted in Christ through the ministry. What Christmas joy that brings to us all!

So, even though it is September, please pray and give as God allows you—in advance for this Christmas's ministries and outreaches. By God's grace and mercy, we will see yet another record number of children blessed by *Immanuel's Child*!

For our Savior,


Michael Johnson
President



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Good News Report is published to report religious news about Russia, the rest of the CIS and the ministries of:

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